TenantVoice magazine

Winter / Spring 2026



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Housing services

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Did you realise you can watch the **Cheltenham Borough Council YouTube channel** for live meetings or to catch up on previous meetings. Scan the QR code or search for us **@CheltenhamBC**









Foreword



Welcome to the winter / spring edition of Tenant Voice. We wanted to share Sophie's story with you after she recently moved home under the mutual exchange scheme (page 4 and 5). She tells us how her two boys have quickly settled and are now enjoying their own bedrooms.

Supporting local people into work is one of the things our training and employment service does and reading J's story (page 7), it's heartening to see how employment can work for you.

Cheltenham is well-known as a festivals town but did you know how many of these events you can enjoy for free? Find out more on page 9.

We want to provide high quality, safe homes that are warm. That's why we're continuing to tackle damp, mould and condensation and with your help we can tackle this. Find out what measures we've taken and how you can play your part on page 10 and 11.

Finally, noisy neighbours can have a significant impact on our quality of life. On page 15, Nick shares his top tips for turning down the noise. You may even be surprised to learn that many residents aren't aware that their actions are causing such distress.

We hope you're getting through the dark and long winter nights knowing that spring is just round the corner.

Rowena and Gareth

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Looking to move home?



In this special two-page feature we explore how you can move home by mutual exchange.

Sophie has been a tenant for 10 years. She and her family decided they needed a bigger home than their two-bedroom house in Pates Avenue. Her boys, aged 11 and 8, really wanted bedrooms of their own. Only a few months after moving, the family feel settled and happy in their three-bedroom home in Hesters Way. Mum Sophie wants to tell her story so it can help other tenants thinking about moving.

A pre-school play assistant, Sophie said tenants can be put off by the stress and process involved in house swaps.

She said: *"Yes, the move did have its moments and it was stressful on occasions. Now that we are settled in, I'm really happy with the choice we made. It's a lovely home and the boys enjoy the extra space and freedom they get by having their own bedrooms."*

264 households were accommodated in 2024/25

Sophie spotted her house on Facebook group HomeSwappers. There's also a national website called HomeSwappers where mutual exchanges can be facilitated between tenants of council properties.

"The tenant who lived in Hesters Way was looking to downsize having raised her family and we were looking for an extra bedroom," **added Sophie** *"It worked out really well for both of us and from the start of the process to the end it took two months in our case."*

We helped 23 families downsize in 2024/25

What is mutual exchange?



Justine Skitt, tenancy management team leader

Meet Justine Skitt. She is your tenancy management team leader and along with her colleagues is able to guide you through your options if you need to move home. In this article she looks at a mutual exchange and explores how it worked so well for Sophie.

She said: *"A mutual exchange is when two tenants agree between themselves to swap homes, often because their circumstances have changed. For example, a family needing more space or someone looking to downsize.*

We work with households to guide both through the process, check that each property is suitable for the incoming family and make sure all safety, legal and tenancy conditions are met.

"Once applications are approved, we help coordinate the practical steps so the move can happen smoothly and both tenants can settle quickly into homes that better meet their needs."



To find out more:
Email the team: **housing@cheltenham.gov.uk**
Phone: **0800 408 0000**





Young people learning science.

Young people learn coding, science and stop-animation

Young people have been busy learning coding, how to make computer games and stop-animation.

The courses, run from Hester's Way and Oakely community resource centres, have proved popular. Learning coding and creating computer games and stop animation involves a combination of skills and creativity.

Our community investment team is working in our communities to create opportunities for young people. The programmes have been supported by Travis Perkins Community Fund.

Mayor congratulates young people



Young people from St Paul's and The Moors have received special praise from the mayor of Cheltenham having successfully gained ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) qualifications.

Elsie Piper, Ashleigh Jones, Khianna James, Keeleigh Partridge, Lilah Peach and Alfie Lightstone worked together on completing their young leadership course which included working on social action projects of their choice based on issues young people are currently facing.

The mayor of Cheltenham, councillor David Willingham, presented the youngsters with special certificates at the Mayor's Parlour, Municipal Offices recently to mark the achievement.



Alexis Turner, community investment officer, the mayor of Cheltenham, councillor David Willingham and young people.

Skills hub success story



J enjoying catering at Cheltenham Racecourse.

The Skills Hub is a free service that offers training, advice and practical help for people who want to find a paid job, learn new skills, grow their confidence and get support with looking for work.

Services provided include:

- **Work clubs:** Help with writing CVs, filling in job applications, practising interview skills and managing Universal Credit accounts.
- **Skills and workshops:** Learning digital skills, basic budgeting, online training courses and building confidence.
- **Additional support:** Special sessions with guest advisers offering benefits, money advice and support from Severn Wye.

J enjoys working at the racecourse. She likes that she can choose when she works and when she has time off. She also enjoys meeting new people and feeling part of a team. But the thing she likes most is the flexibility it gives her life.

After being unwell for some time, J is thankful for the support and help she received from the training and employment team at The Skills Hub in Hesters Way Community Resource Centre.

- Gayna Griffiths, training and employment co-ordinator, said: "J has done really well and has found our service helpful in supporting her to find the type of work that suits her."

Drop-in sessions take place at Hesters Way Community Resource Centre, with extra support also available at Oakley Community Resource Centre.

For more information please email **tes@cheltenham.gov.uk** or call **0800 408 0000** (freephone).

Helping you into work

We are working with our partners to help you find jobs. The Training and Employment Service, called TES, and Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum, called GARAS, are working together as partners to support you. Together we are helping you to learn job skills, use computers, find jobs and help with applications. By working together in this way, we help build your confidence when you are applying for jobs.

Recently GARAS has supported people into work at Cheltenham Racecourse. Both recruits, pictured right, are doing well, enjoying work and continuing to learn skills and gain experience.

For more information, please email **tes@cheltenham.gov.uk** or contact **0800 408 0000** (freephone).



Residents enjoying work at Cheltenham Racecourse.

“You said, we did”

We don’t just listen we also act too

We wanted to thank you for your feedback which is helping to make improvements to our service and your home.

We know we don’t always get it right and that can be frustrating. It’s important though that you do voice your opinion because it does shape the service you receive.

Please let us know your views by emailing **community.involvement@cheltenham.gov.uk** or phoning **0800 408 0000**.

Thanks to your feedback we are:

- Improving communal areas across blocks and schemes by painting walls and planting trees. The condition of the environment in which we live does make a big difference. So look out for our teams as they go about their work improving living space.
- Continuing to make improvements to homes so they are warm and safe especially during these dark, colder months. If you have concerns about damp, mould or condensation, please report it to us.
- Working again with young people to give them opportunities to develop their skills and learn.







Tenants' handbook



We are currently refreshing the tenants' handbook to make it more relevant, simpler and easier for you to use.

The tenants' handbook is your official guide setting out clear information about living in and managing your home and explains both what you are responsible for and what you can expect from the council as your landlord. It is not a legal document like your tenancy agreement itself, but it works alongside that agreement to make things easier to understand.

As well as outlining your rights as tenant, the handbook is a guide through the wide range of housing services available as well as being full of practical advice and tips on day-to-day living in your home.

Once done it will be available to download via Tenant Voice and can be accessible in different languages.

Free festivals programme for everyone this year



Cheltenham is well-known as the town of festivals but did you know that many of the events programme is free? A lot of effort has gone into making events free and family friendly. And that's no different this year. As the cost-of-living crisis continues, here's a few highlights for you and the family to look forward to.

Cheltenham Festivals: Organisers of the town's big four: jazz, science, music and literature festivals, which runs from April – October, have gone to great lengths to make many of their events free.

Summer Jam: Last year's family-friendly three-day weekend at The Brewery Quarter will return in 2026 over the summer months with a wide range of activities for adults and children. A programme including dates will be announced shortly.

Free walking tour of the town: Encourage your children to learn about Cheltenham's most well-known buildings and test their observation skills with a fun self-guided tour which can be enjoyed at any time.

Heritage open days: This September discover Cheltenham's historic past with free guided walks. It's your chance to see hidden places and try out new experiences - all of which are free to explore.

For more information visit **www.visitcheltenham.com**



Keeping you safe against damp, mould and condensation

Damp, mould and condensation can be a problem in many homes. They can make your home feel cold, smell musty and look dirty.

More importantly, they can be bad for your health, especially for children, older people and anyone with breathing problems. Condensation happens when warm air meets cold walls or windows. Damp and mould can grow if this is not dealt with.

We've taken a number of positive steps to make improvements. These include:

- A review of our housing against damp and mould ensuring works were prioritised and undertaken. Treatment involved mould washes and repairing walls.
- Our new team, established to target damp, mould and condensation, continues to manage and monitor all damp and mould-related issues across our housing.



- We invested in new technology to monitor damp and condensation in real time. Sensors installed in affected properties collect 24-hour data, allowing the DMC team to identify peak moisture levels for example, during cooking or bathing and to provide advice or further improvement works.

There are practical steps you can take to reduce moisture and help prevent damp, mould and condensation. We've developed the following top five tips to help you.

Top five tips to help prevent damp and mould at home

1 Ventilate your home every day

Moist air needs a way to escape. Open windows regularly, even for short periods, especially after cooking, bathing or showering. Use extractor fans where fitted and keep air vents clear and unblocked.

2 Heat your home consistently

Keeping rooms at a steady, low-level warmth helps prevent condensation from forming on cold surfaces. Even in colder months, maintaining a consistent temperature is more effective than short bursts of high heat.

3 Manage moisture from everyday activities

Always use pan lids when cooking and close kitchen and bathroom doors to stop moisture spreading. Avoid drying clothes on radiators or indoors where possible. If you must dry clothes inside, ensure the room is well ventilated.

4 Keep walls and furniture clear

Leave a small gap between furniture and external walls so air can circulate. Avoid overfilling wardrobes or cupboards on outside walls, as trapped air can encourage mould growth.



5 Report problems early

If you notice persistent condensation, damp patches, peeling wallpaper or mould growth, please report it to us straight away. Early action helps prevent small issues from becoming bigger problems.

If you have any concerns in relation to damp, mould or condensation email **housing@cheltenham.gov.uk** or phone **0800 408 0000**.

Our team visits Wallace House and Popes Close

We've been out and about as part of our ongoing commitment to meet with residents, tenants and leaseholders. This time the team visited Wallace House, in Hatherley as well as Pope's Close, Swindon Rd.

We believe everyone deserves a quality home and the right to live in a safe and strong community. Of course, we cannot do this without your views, which is why we continue to listen and act on your feedback.

To help us better understand what matters to you, we know that we need to be out and about and having those conversations with you.



Our team visits Wallace House





Listening and acting

In October, November and December 2025:

76
complaints were opened.

71
complaints received a response.

7.5 days
was the average time to respond to complaints without extensions.

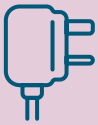
46 out of 71
complaints responded were within 10 working days (65%) and all of these were responded to within their target date.

Fire safety – check out the following top tips

We're hot on fire safety and are reminding all our tenants about the potential dangers posed by the lithium-ion batteries in e-bikes and scooters when charging them.

Please be careful with convertor kits sold online, which do not meet UK safety regulations and present an increased fire risk.

When charging your e-bike or e-scooter, it's important to:



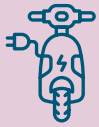
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions and always unplug your charger when it's finished charging



- Ensure you have a working smoke alarm where you charge your e-bike or e-scooter



- Charge batteries whilst you are awake and alert. **Do not** charge batteries overnight while you are asleep or away from home



- Always use the approved manufacturer's charger for the e-bike or e-scooter. Buy an official replacement charger/battery from a reputable seller



- Do not cover chargers or battery packs when charging as this could lead to overheating



- Do not charge batteries or store your e-bike or e-scooter near combustible or flammable materials



- Do not over charge the battery



- Do not overload socket outlets or use inappropriate extension leads

To find out more about home fire safety and to complete your own online home fire safety check visit gloucestershire.gov.uk/safe-and-well/

Turning down the noise

Anti-social noise can have a dramatic impact on your quality of life and our team continues to work carefully with tenants to raise awareness and improve neighbourhoods.



Nick Such, tenancy services manager, said: *"Our anti-social behaviour (ASB) team is about supporting communities, not punishing people. We know that noise issues can be stressful, but they're often best resolved by working together. By listening, offering advice and encouraging understanding, we help residents find solutions that work for everyone.*

"To help tackle the issue the ASB team have turned to technology. The noise nuisance app tracks noise levels and a recording can be sent to the team for monitoring.

Nick added: *"The app enables victims to record noise levels, add their thoughts and share it with us. It forms an important part of the process."*

When a noise issue is reported, the ASB Team works with everyone involved to understand the situation and the impact it may be having. We provide clear guidance on expected noise levels and tenancy responsibilities, while also supporting tenants to find ways of reducing disturbance and maintaining positive relationships with neighbours.



Meet Nick Such



The service focuses on:

- Listening carefully to residents experiencing noise disturbance.
- Working with tenants to raise awareness of how noise may affect others.
- Offering advice, mediation and agreed actions to reduce noise levels.
- Supporting early resolution before issues escalate.
- Working with partner agencies where additional help is needed.

While formal enforcement action is a measure open to the team this option is reserved for the most extreme circumstances.

Nick said: *"We do have statutory powers of eviction although most people find a workable solution. That's important to us."*

Top 5 tips to help turn down the noise

- Use gadgets that help contain noise. For example, headphones kill noisy music.
- Step outside your house, close the door and take a few steps. If you can hear noise coming from inside your home then it's too loud.
- If you have a dog and are leaving it for lengthy periods throughout the day, consider how you can support your pet. For example, can a family member or friend walk them?
- Talk to your neighbour. You'll be surprised how effective this can be. Often people don't realise how noisy they are being or how this is impacting on your life.
- If it's within your budget purchase underlay for your carpet or anti-vibration pads to go under your washing machine – particularly if you live in a flat.





Warm welcome, happy faces and new friends

Warm smiles and friendly faces welcome you at Goldfoot House in Cheltenham's Griffith Avenue. People come together regularly to enjoy a warm drink, take part in light activities and to feel a part of something.

For some, it is the only place in the week where they see other people. For others, it is where they start to feel happy and confident again.

ENRICH is about helping people feel better in body and mind. It is free and open to adults.

Each week, people can try gentle exercise, art, music, cooking or a walk in nature. Some days there is dancing. Other days there is painting, gardening or learning how to cook a healthy meal.

But the most important thing is not the activity - it is the people, **said Clare Davies, community investment officer.**

"Many who come have felt lonely or low for a long time," Clare said. "Being here they can make contact with others, have a laugh and make friendships.

"Our sessions are calm, friendly and kind. There is no pressure. You can join in, or you can just sit and watch. Both are fine."

Ian Mason, a local resident, added: *"By bringing people together, the programme helps build confidence, friendships and hope. It shows that small things like a chat, a cup of tea, a short walk, a bit of art, can change a life."*



(left to right) Ian Mason, Terry Chamberlain, Mayor of Cheltenham Cllr David Willingham and Annie Bertolone.



Molly and Louise enjoying group yoga.

Sessions are held at Goldfoot House, Griffith Avenue on Tuesdays between 11am – 1pm. Feel free to drop in.

Digital support for you and your family

Some people do not have a laptop or computer at home. This can make everyday life harder. It can affect schoolwork, job searching, learning new skills or staying in touch with services and family.

We are working with ITSA Digital Trust to help. Through their tech connect community programme, people may be able to get a laptop or computer to use at home. This support is for people who would benefit from being online, such as children doing homework, adults looking for work or residents learning new skills.

Referrals must be made by a member of staff, not by individuals. If you know someone in your community who could benefit, please get in touch with us. We have the application form and can help with the referral process. Equipment is given out when available, so numbers may be limited.

We also want to remind residents that help is available to build computer skills. Our training and employment service can support people with using computers, searching for jobs and getting online. They also run a friendly digital drop-in service.

To find out more, email:
Rebekka.mann@cheltenham.gov.uk
or call **0800 408 0000.**







New ground source heat pumps cutting carbon and bills

Something exciting is happening at 320 Swindon Road. New, affordable homes are being built for social rent and shared ownership.

These homes, 24 in total, will be powered by air as well as ground source heat pumps cutting the costs of bills and supporting greener homes. Work has already started on-site with the installation of ground source heat pumps.

Homes will include solar panels and ground source heat pumps helping to reduce bills.

Green outdoor spaces have also been included to encourage biodiversity, with areas for trees and planting, as well as features to support wildlife such as hedgehog highways and bat, bee and bird boxes.

Local employment is important to us as well as supporting apprenticeship opportunities.



(left to right): Ben Smith, Richard King, Cllr Richard Pineger and Amy Keates.

Science explorers:
Free fun for curious kids

We are supporting curious children discover more about the world round them.

Science explorers is a free club where children will have fun, get messy and learn more about science by getting involved.

Sessions are run over five weeks and are typically held between 4pm - 5pm during a week day at one of our resource centres.

Each week, children will explore a new science topic through games, experiments and hands-on activities. **Topics include:**



- **Farts** (Learning about the human body and anatomy).
- **Bridges** (How they stay up using physics).
- **British Science Week** (Learning how scientists test ideas).
- **Colourful chemistry** (Mixing colours and safe reactions).
- **Easter science** (Fun seasonal experiments).

The sessions are interactive, which means children don't just sit and listen - they get involved, ask questions and try things out for themselves. There's lots of laughter, learning and discovery along the way.

The club, which is run by Fun Science Cheltenham and supported by our housing services team, is free and it's a great chance for children to build confidence, make friends and enjoy learning outside of school.

Spaces may be limited so to book please visit:
www.forms.office.com/e/JvhfFiMga5
or scan the QR code above.

Drop in **and see us**

Come and join us at our drop in sessions for free to get money and benefit advice.

You'll find the team:

Every Wednesday
10am-2pm
Job Centre Plus, Cheltenham

Every Thursday
9-11am
Ron Smith Pavillion, Springback, Cheltenham

Not able to make it to the sessions?

You can contact the team by phoning the customer helpline or by sending an email to **bma@cbh.org.**

Have you had your gas capped and are struggling with getting it back on due to the debt on the meter?

We may be able to help. Give us a call and speak with the team.

You can contact the team by phoning **01242 264341** or by **emailing benefits@cheltenham.gov.uk**

These sessions provide you with the opportunity to raise any money concerns that you have, whether that is seeking advice about cost of living or general budgeting tips.



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